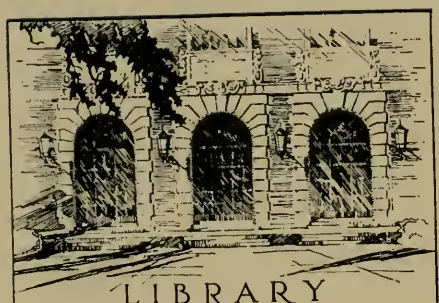

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hope very distinctly a rising Church from elevation to elevation," Mr. Gladstone concluded by saying that in the face of a large majority of Welsh members being pledged to support disestablishment, he could no longer resist their demand, and expressed his conviction that "the people of England, who are eminently a just people, will give and will insist on giving to Wales in respect of her reasonable demands the same just, equitable, and conclusive settlement which in the like circumstances I believe they would claim for themselves."

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A SPEECH

BY

HIS GRACE THE LORD ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

AT THE

CHURCH CONGRESS, RHYL,

ON

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 6, 1891.

REVISED BY THE SPEAKER.

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A SPEECH

BY

HIS GRACE THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY,

AT THE

Church Congress, Rhyl, October 6, 1891.

THE ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY:—

I should gladly, if time would meet but half the demands on it, have accepted your invitation to preach on this great occasion. But having preached at some length two years ago at Cardiff, I was also clearly of opinion—an opinion infinitely justified this morning—that it was better that the Congress and the Church should hear another voice on the same subject. The pressure of engagements at present is such that I am obliged to find myself again in London to-night, and to ask you, therefore (however unwillingly, and however much to my own loss), to suffer me to withdraw from your presence very shortly. But one thing proved to be quite impossible. It was impossible that I should not, for my office' sake, as well as my own, be at your opening service and session.

I am not here, indeed, to teach or to inform you. That would be a vain thought, considering that I speak in the presence of experts, historians, statisticians, whose utterances teem with facts both old and new, who have never shrunk from investigating any one of the accusations which have been heaped so bountifully upon your forefathers, your selves, and your contemporaries; who have hunted every allegation down; who have detected the false impressions, the delusions, under which men of goodness and sense labour when they acquiesce in the thought

Testimony to other workers.

that your dear country might be benefited by the abolition of its vastest, most ancient, most beneficent institution, and by the diversion of the pittances which, from immemorial time, have been designed to carry help, comfort, and light to the remotest vales and hillsides. It would be a vain thought, I say, for me to enter upon detailed arguments when you have among you a Bevan, a Griffith Roberts, a John Morgan, a Dean Owen (and there are many others I might name); when the Congress is presided over by yourself, my Lord; and when one of the most learned and impartial jurists, legists, Chancellors, England has ever known has written and spoken with such deliberateness and weight.

I am here, you will understand, simply as the natural representative of the province to which you belong; and it is no small matter that my brother is here too to answer for the Northern Province, to tell you that neither your own sister dioceses nor your half-sisters are indifferent when you are even threatened. We are here with no political or polemical aim. We have made no challenge. But a challenge has been given us with no uncertain sound—a challenge which cannot be left unanswered without injustice.

Charges unfair.

Well, then, the first thing we have to say is, that we have felt it our duty to examine into certain charges laid against you as you are. We have examined them, and we are convinced that they are grossly unfair. In the concluding words of a recent writer: "One-half that is written in Welsh newspapers or spoken on Welsh platforms against the Church in Wales consists of exaggeration or misrepresentation."

Hindrance of opponents to Church reform.

But we go further than that. We have to accuse *some* of the accusers of doing their utmost to perpetuate any evil which they pretend to deplore.

For years past there have been measures before Parliament which would render the removal of any real scandals easy and effective. Again and again such measures have been hindered; and last Session they were within a few hours of passing in

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a form which men's consciences approved—even the consciences of men by no means friendly to the Church—when they were again thwarted by less than twenty men (mostly, I say it with sorrow, from this Principality), whose spokesmen made an avowal which comes practically to this—that the Church must be prevented from reforming scandals which she detests, lest topics should fail when the Church has to be denounced. It is difficult—nay, impossible—to believe that her fairer opponents will allow their battles to be fought with weapons such as these.

Nature of charges.

What are their charges? They are partly those sad and isolated evils which she desires to reform and they desire to retain; and partly they are her highest merits. If devoted clergy educate the poor children, that is proselytism. I have seen Lampeter described as a persecution. Even the Welsh translation of the Bible, printed and published three hundred years ago at an Archbishop's cost, is said to be imputed to us as a wrong.

Is the Church "alien"?

But of all charges, the broadest, the most sweeping, the most taking, so to speak, is the most untrue: the Church in Wales, we are told, is "an alien Church." An alien Church! That has at once so glib and so ringing a sound. But has it any meaning? When was it found out that it was an alien Church? Did the old Eisteddfods think it such when harpers and bards were scholars and teachers in the Church, even down to the days of Bishop Heber? Was it thought an alien Church when Archbishop Peckham made his toilsome journey the whole land through, because the Church alone, which belonged alike to both, could explain English policy to Llewelyn and conciliate the good will of King Edward? Was it thought alien when, under Tudors and Stuarts, forty-four Welshmen succeeded in turn to the four Welsh sees, and Welshmen filled so many posts on both the English Benches—of Judges and Bishops? Was it thought alien when your famous scholar Morgan translated the Bible under the roof of the Dean of Westminster, and brought it out at the charges of the Archbishop of Canterbury?

The imputation that William III. pursued an anti-Welsh policy by means of the Church has been long disposed of. He appointed none but Welshmen to Welsh sees. Was it thought an alien Church by Welshmen under the House of Hanover, when they all were Churchmen, and nearly all were Jacobites? Did the "Old Fathers of Nonconformity" (as they are called) think it an alien Church—they who ever called her "The Old Mother," and died in her arms; they who prophesied "the great revival," which has come through the last half-century, and is quickening still? Did they object to an Established Church? Did the Establishment supply one single motive to their movement? Is there a word of theirs which speaks of Establishment as inimical to spiritual religion? Not a syllable. Mr. Gladstone, in the spirit of fairness, has demonstrated that such a theory has no foundation in those Old Fathers' minds.

But, my friends, we know well where the evil root was. We know all about George II. and Sir Robert Walpole. We know how your sees and your deaneries were used for political purposes. We know the bitter fruits of that day of formality and torpor, of nepotism and non-residence.

But, friends, we know it best because we suffered along with you. Not one of your troubles and oppressions but weighed equally on England. Where you lost, we lost. Our very losses showed our oneness. And where we recover you recover. Neither of us has won all back. But we win fast. That is why we are assailed. That day is gone for ever. And if the Church has learned lessons, the State has learned lessons more severe, more wide-reaching. To lay that hand of corruption again upon the Church has become impossible for ever.

True cause of weakness.

But the lesson we have learnt does not unlearn the ancient doctrine, nor the teaching of our own Hooker, that the Christian State is the Christian Church in another character. So it has always been in Britain, save during the short time of the Roman captivity, and so it will be still.

But the great historic fact unaffected.

No! there is not a shadow of a truth in the catchword,

"Alien Church." Even if you look but on outward forms, the Churches of England and of Wales were one 150 years before the States were one. Truer, historically, would it be to speak of "the Church of Wales in England" than of "the Church of England in Wales." For the succession of Augustine died out strangely soon, but the Celtic consecrators of St. Chad, with the Northerners who came from Aidan, have their successors in every see. Nay, the very plan, the very orientation of all our churches is pre-Roman, Celtic, Welsh. The whole history of Wales witnesses to this —that when she was most Welsh she was most identified with the Church. If the Church anywhere is a national institution, she was national to Wales.

The Church not "alien," but essentially "national."

And how stands the case now? Now, for a long while you have had native prelates and native deans. What is the concurrent Church history?

The position now.

For figures—because extended figures are difficult to follow—I take twenty years of the diocese we are in to-day, as they have already been brought before you. But I believe that if we took all four Welsh dioceses the conclusions would be most fully confirmed. I will not repeat, significant as they are, figures which bear more on the material than on the spiritual side of the case. In St. Asaph then a score of years has sufficed to nearly double the number of children who attend Church elementary schools. In England and Wales the percentage of population which attends our Church elementary schools is 7·3. But in St. Asaph it is 10·3. In the same twenty years the average attendance in Church Sunday schools has increased 37 per cent. Higher yet, the number of Church communicants has doubled in the same twenty years. Further, the number of persons confirmed in ten years past (many of them adults) is 20,000, as against 15,000 in the ten years before, and 12,000 in the ten years before that. Not only vast increase, but vast progressive increase. But the most interesting way of testing what is the process is this: in the English dioceses we are well

Manifold evidence of Church progress.

content to be able to show that in the last ten years there has been a steady increase in our numbers confirmed of 8 per cent. But in the Welsh dioceses the average increase has been—do you know what? It has been 22 per cent.

These are marks of what is (we are told) a falling Church, a recognised failure, a declining hold. I would fain ask modestly, What would be marks of progress?

Our business is to note progress of our own, not the deficiencies of others. But it is impossible to avoid asking whether there are similar signs of progress in the bodies which denounce us. I am most ready to be corrected if I am misinformed. But if facts are accurately reported to me, the number of resident Nonconformist ministers has during the last five years, for which alone we have returns, diminished in this small diocese by 24. Ninety out of its 208 parishes know no resident minister. If this be true, we think of it in no spirit of self-satisfaction. But we are bound to ask what is the living force that is prepared to be responsible for the towns and villages of Wales. Be it far from me to disparage the religious work of religious men; but that form of religious work has begun to fade and wane with the return of fuller light and knowledge. Such is my conviction. But will even any one who may not share it declare that he believes that Nonconformity in this stage is ready and ripe to under take and execute the Church's work?

Inadequacy of Nonconformity to do the work.

I have mentioned only those few statistics which illustrate the spiritual growth of the Church. The record of moneys, of cathedrals, of churches and church buildings, and other material things is more striking still. I feel less concerned in it. Material will always follow spiritual.

It is the spiritual increase which is my assurance of many good days to come. For a spiritual growth it is. There are those who know where it has its roots—how, not only in the promotion of good morals, of temperance, of education, in the diffusion of sounder knowledge of many subjects, and of the history

Spiritual growth.

and facts of their own Church, in the extension of missions and the multiplying of Welsh services, the clergy and the Church have been striving to elevate, to purify, and to enlighten. There are those who know how they have laboured to clear the spiritual insight and raise the spiritual aims and hopes of their own order. There are those who know how blest have been the mutual counsels and united devotions of the pastors.

Difficulties we know they have, far beyond their brethren—difficulties caused by the past, difficulties arising out of their felt duties to the ancient tongue, difficulties immense from the immense and rapid increase of populations. But these are grappled with in wisest ways by firm leaders and courageous followers. And already the successes far exceed the difficulties.

Undoubted difficulties.

To difficulties some would add terrors—the terrors of comparison with Ireland. An utterly irrelevant, inapposite comparison. The Church established in Ireland contained less than an eighth of the population. Somewhat less than four-fifths of the population were no Protestant Nonconformists, they were Roman Catholics of the most immovable type. The partition from England was the Irish Channel, not a broad borderland, interwoven and intermingled undistinguishably in race, in speech, in common habits, common business.

But no terrors.

The work that is in hourly progress to which such assaults are the liveliest testimony will shortly heal many discords and solve many difficulties. Our work respects every conscience, and is itself respected. But what would be healed by confiscating the only lands, the only properties, which now exact from the owners personal service to the community, and by throwing them only into the furnace of selfish competition? Has any people ever, by the evidence of impassioned history, by the mere calculation of cold profit and loss, gained permanently or temporarily by the spoliation of its Church? Do

Disestablishment only an evil.

we not know, have we not read, the Cromwellian experiment on Wales, and how it answered—the misery, the animosity, the wreck of religion, the reaction which made Wales devotedly Jacobite?

May such vain experiments be never more repeated, such loss, material and spiritual, never incurred. It cannot be incurred if you are true to your position and your opportunities; if you are content to exercise that "self-sacrifice which is the fountain of honour both with God and man."

Cannot come.

We have spoken of the tangible and the external, but our hearts are not there. We have spoken of them as instruments in this world of that devotion to the widest interests of the people, that love of souls, that "perfect charity" without which faith, knowledge, zeal are nothing worth. Of this I am here to assure you. This is the message that I bring you.

Church life means spiritual edification.

We should think scorn of ourselves if we contentedly beheld the established Christianity of Scotland—Presbyterian though it be in discipline—discharged of its duties, and dislodged from its tenure, as the spiritual organ of the State and kingdom of Scotland united with us by comparatively recent ties.

If Churchmen true to Scotland much more to Wales.

But you, who are our eldest selves, fountain of our episcopacy, the very designers of our sanctuaries, the primæval British dioceses, from whom our very realm derives its only title to be called by its proudest name of Great Britain, I come from the steps of the chair of Augustine, your younger ally, to tell you that, by the Benediction of God, we will not quietly see you disinherited.

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